

IPMEN

Townsville, Australia

19th October 2008

Dear Pacific Leaders,

The delegates at the International Pacific Marine Educators Network (IPMEN) meeting in Townsville, 17- 19th October 2008, believe that it is time for action to protect the important values of the Pacific Ocean, its biodiversity, its natural resources, and the cultures of its people.

The Pacific Ocean contains the largest and most diverse coral reef ecosystems, supports rich temperate zones in its cooler waters, is a major source of food for the world, and extends for over half of the surface of planet earth. It supports ocean based economies and is the engine-room of the earth's climate.

The Pacific also supports the most diverse range of cultures in the world from Australasia and East Asia, through the many island countries of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, through to the Americas. The lives of these people are dependent on the integrity of the Pacific Ocean system.

In the face of vast shared threats such climate change, marine pollution, over-exploitation of resources, and the challenge of growing populations, it is critical that our leaders work together to develop solutions to keep the Pacific Ocean healthy, a task that requires immediate attention. The health of the Pacific Ocean is under threat and all Pacific countries must join forces to collaborate in the protection of this unique system.

This conference brought together over 90 people committed to marine education from more than 15 countries across the Pacific Basin, from Japan to Chile, and from Australia to North America. The group comprised educators, scientists, agency representatives, Non-Government Organisations, and philanthropic groups, who have taken an unprecedented step to build partnerships across the region. The object of the conference has been to build a knowledge sharing network and the blending of traditional and western knowledge for sustainable ocean management.

Conference convener Andrew Vance encourages the region's leaders to follow the example set at this forum. "We're doing our part, now it's up to you" he said.

We, the undersigned, and representatives of many Pacific Nations, urge you to immediately establish forums for meaningful dialogue, and to develop and implement effective programs to protect the values of our Pacific Ocean.

Signed in Townsville, 19th October 2008

2008 – SPREP International Year of the Reef

JOHN WALSH OF BRANNAGH
ECONORFOOT FOUNDATION
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Harry Brindley *HB* - Maritime Educational Australia.

Daphne Marks - Marine Parks Authority, NSW, Australia.

Tammy Tabe - Ecosian Society, University of the South Pacific.

Andrew Vance - Marine Educators Society of Australasia *AV*